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STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL, INR/AA;  
USAID FOR AFR/WA (DALZOUMA)

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: NIGERIAN NUGGETS -- JANUARY 11, 2010

Classified By: Political Counselor James P. McAnulty  
for reasons in sections 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) Mission Nigeria provides the following compilation of recent political, economic, and social developments not previously reported.

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AVIATION COMMUNITY EXPRESSES  
SUPPORT FOR MORE SCREENING  
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¶2. (U) Members of the Nigerian aviation community expressed their support for the introduction of increased security screening following the December 25 attempted bombing of a U.S. jetliner. Airline Operators of Nigeria (AON), an aviation association comprised of members working for more than 20 commercial carriers, informed the U.S. Mission via mail that they "endorse in totality President Obama's directive (to) tighten air operation guidelines." The general public, however, expressed mixed opinions. For example, members of the public echoed the AON's sentiment during a Vision FM call-in radio show in Hausa, "Nijeriya A Yau," stating that the first major duty of any country is to protect its citizens from attack. On the other hand, a Nigerian Television Authority survey reported that most Nigerians are opposed to the inclusion of Nigeria as a "country of interest" by the United States calling the action, "unnecessary," "unwarranted," and "unfortunate."

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USG STATEMENT ON NIGER BRINGS TANDJA BACK TO TABLE  
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¶3. (U) Former President of Nigeria and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Mediator General Abdulsalami Abubakar continued mediation efforts between President Mamadou Tandja's government and Niger's opposition leaders in Niamey during the week of December 21, aimed at ending the ongoing constitutional political crisis. ECOWAS released a statement on December 22, saying it "takes note of the fact that December 22, 2009, marks the legal end of the mandate of President Mamadou Tandja." ECOWAS already suspended Niger's membership in October. President Tandja's government reacted on December 23 "with astonishment and indignation about the ECOWAS 22 December 2009 statement," stressing that the unhelpful statement had come just one day after the opening of the inter-Nigerien dialogues.

¶4. (C) ECOWAS Political Affairs Director Dr. Abdel-Fatau Musah told PolMilOff on January 5 that upon learning of the ECOWAS statement on the Tandja mandate issue, the Nigerien

delegation walked out and negotiations stalled. Dr. Musah expressed "great appreciation" for the USG statement issued the same day suspending humanitarian aid to Niger and imposing travel restrictions on members of Tandja's government, remarking that Tandja's delegation "was forced back to the table." Though negotiations resumed, Tandja's delegation did not budge, "refusing to give an inch" during negotiations. On January 5, Dr. Musah drafted a new proposal envisioned by Abubakar proposing a constitutional convention, rather than a return to the old Constitution. According to Musah, Niger opposition leaders were willing to accept this compromise.

SANDERS